



CORNUCOPIA

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Words of Wisdom

FOLGERS AND THE SACRAMENT CUP

I WAS NINE YEARS OLD WHEN I BECAME A HARDENED sinner. Grandpa wanted to teach me to fly fish, so we planned a weekend trip—just the two of us. I loved him, of course, but this particular grandparent was more intimidating than the meanest old-lady-substitute-Primary-teacher.

We rode up in Grandpa's ancient diesel VW Vanagon—a vehicle never known for its stealth. Add the fact that, due to a childhood illness, Grandpa was deaf in his right ear, and it becomes clear why all our conversations sounded like shouting matches. But though these barriers to communication were high, they did not stop Grandpa from hollering a few jokes at me as we pattered north from Salt Lake. Jokes I would never repeat to my mother.

"What was the last thing to go through that bug's brain?" he barked, pointing at a particularly large red-green splotch on his windshield.

"I don't know," I shouted. "What?"

"His anus."

We got to the fishing hole before dark, time enough to pull in a few rainbows. Gramps did not have a pair of waders small enough for me. So I got to "Man up, kid." Even in mid-summer, the water was icy and numbed my skinny legs quickly. Grandpa had attached a billy club to his waders. He used it to crush the fish's head as he pulled it out of the water. As for billy-clubless me, I was just supposed to break the fish's back with my bare hands.

Fishing was rapidly losing its allure.

Finally, the sun sank below the horizon, and I gratefully followed Grandpa to the van, shivering all the way. We drove to a parking lot, warmed up a nice dinner of pork and beans, and retired for the night. I knew that a full day of fishing awaited us tomorrow. A day full of fire and brimstone, damnation and hellfire, because God had me in his scope and was about to pull the trigger.

I woke as Gramps fried up some of the previous night's catch. I still have no concept of his actual skill at cooking trout—I've never been able to bring myself to try trout again. I picked at my fish for some time while he worked

at the stove, fiddling with a strange, tall pot with a transparent bubble on top. The clear bubble flashed brown occasionally. After a few minutes, Gramps finally poured me a mug of whatever it was. Pushing the mug across the breakfast table, he muttered, "And here's some sugar, if you want it."

I was nine. Of course I wanted sugar! I wanted even more after I tried Grandpa's new drink. Could he make nothing that tasted decent? A liberal dousing of sugar was the only thing that made the drink passable. I stopped pretending to eat the fish and nursed this new breakfast drink instead. I soon realized, however, that I had scrimped on the sugar. So I added more after every few sips and quickly found the sugar was not helping anymore. The drink became cold.

There I sat, longing for the pork and beans of the night before, picking at a mauled trout fillet, playing with a half cup of brown swill swimming over a bed of undissolved sugar, when Grandpa's harsh voice scolded me:

"What, you're gunna be a damn Mormon brat and not



LEWIS GARVEY

drink your coffee, either?"

Suddenly the reality of Grandpa's bitter brown liquid became horribly clear. I sat dumbstruck, my mouth suddenly glued shut. A flood of Primary lessons came rushing back to me. "The Lord has given us these bodies. They are holy temples. And cursed is he who defiles a temple of the Lord," I could hear Sister X declaring, "How would you feel if someone spray-painted graffiti all over the Salt Lake Temple? Well, that's how Heavenly Father feels when we don't respect our bodies!"

And here I was pouring filth straight into my temple!

My mind was racing. "Coffee! How could you be so blind, Bryce? Maybe you wanted to be blind. You wanted to be led away in sin. You wanted to walk close to the edge. Well, you've done it now. You've walked up to the edge and jumped right off. I sure hope hell is nice this time of year. Hello, Brother Lucifer, long time no see."

Plainly, I had become one of the vilest of sinners. However, I knew without a shadow of a doubt that my fallen, sinful, horrifying state should be kept from my family, especially my parents. The first few years of my deception turned out to be easier than I had feared. I wasn't due for my next bishop's interview until I was 12; and not having the priesthood meant no monthly PPI's investigating my strict adherence to the Word of Wisdom.

THE SACRAMENT, HOWEVER, was a challenge. My education in this area had been quite complete. You were *not* supposed to partake of the Sacrament if you were not worthy, unless you wanted to ensure your own damnation, of course. Woe unto him who eateth unworthily and whatnot. I knew that I had already bought my ticket to the underworld, but I didn't need any more flight insurance.

So I developed a strategy to hide my shameful status as a sacrament non-partaker. When the bread was passed to me, I would pinch it between thumb and forefinger, bring it toward my mouth, and deftly palm the piece of bread. I could then slip it inconspicuously into a pocket while a bit of artful misdirection on my part—pretending to chew and swallow—completed the illusion. I was a David Copperfield in training. I could make anything disappear. Until the next tray arrived.

Water. It was just an ounce or so, but it was a liquid ounce. I could not simply palm and pocket this. Nor could I merely pass the tray untouched. The whole ward would obviously see that. Neither could I just press the cup to my lips, as Pops would surely notice. I had no choice but to allow the water to enter my mouth. Only then could I evade detection as the whited sepulcher that I had become. But once in my mouth, the water could not be allowed to proceed down my throat, lest it nourish the seed of damnation inside me.

I was a skinny, limber child who could easily double over on the pew. It seems only obvious that I would assume this reverent, contemplative pose after taking the water. Letting the water trickle out from my mouth onto my knee thus became child's play. My father, who could detect whether or not water had been sipped from the small paper cup, would never notice the four-inch wet spot on my knee. Or, if all else failed, I could

wait until the sacrament was over, go out into the foyer, run the drinking fountain, and place my lips into the stream. Only then would I allow the damning water to dribble out of my mouth and down the drain.

This continued for three years.

As I neared my twelfth birthday, I realized what would soon bring my house of cards crashing down around me: the required interview with the bishop prior to my ordination to the priesthood. I had the Articles of Faith down pat, but I had no idea what questions the bishop would ask me nor what the consequences would be for failing to answer one correctly. Public humiliation? Denial of the priesthood? I didn't know, but my conscience was not completely seared by my wicked past. I resolved that I would not tell a lie to the bishop. I knew I was already in deep enough.

The bulk of the interview passed without note—my worries were for naught—until that last question. The one designed to catch sinners like me.

Yes, there were things in my life that would keep me from receiving the Priesthood.

Lower lip quivering, my mouth opened. And though the powers of hell conspired against me, making the walls close in around me, my throat dry up, and my stomach clench, I confessed.

I can still hear the bishop laughing.

BRYCE KIRTON PETERSEN
Columbus, Ohio

Blogwatch

CONFESSIONS OF A SHOPPING MALL SANTA

An earlier version of this essay was posted 12 November 2006 on SUNSTONEBLOG.COM.

CHRISTMAS SEASON, 1989. I WAS A FRESHMAN AT the University of Utah, my first year away from home. Like any college student, I was looking for extra holiday cash, and the Help Wanted ad for a shopping mall Santa seemed like just the thing.

Despite my 18-year-oldness, the manager was desperate to fill the big chair, so I walked out of my short interview with a prosthetic belly, a red suit, a wig, and some bells.

Christmas had lost its luster a decade before, the day I had gone searching for my swimming mask and snorkel in our travel trailer. It turned out that my parents had thought the travel trailer was an ideal hiding place for Santa's loot. It had been until their young son decided that he needed a mask and snorkel in the dead of winter.

I spent several years playing along, afraid to reveal that I knew the big secret, afraid that the loot would vanish.

Life as an 18-year-old Santa wasn't very glamorous. I would lug a large suitcase to the mall and make my way upstairs, beyond the food court, into an access hallway, and finally to my



JEANNETTE ATWOOD

“dressing room.” A janitor’s closet. Yes, literally. Complete with mops, buckets, vacuums, and the acrid smell of cleaning agents.

In this little room, I would transform into a fat, jolly elf. I’d put on my belly, don my red velvet suit, deftly apply the makeup to add decades to my face, and top it off with the beard, wig, and hat.

I was Santa. On the outside anyway.

On the inside, I was recoiling from the ever-lengthening holiday season, the Christmas music beginning on Halloween, the in-store decorations getting dusty even before Thanksgiving, all presided over by the retail juggernaut. I wanted the magic of Christmas. I looked for it. But it had been elusive, making me weary and jaded.

I’d wait until I heard the sound of Santa #1’s bells coming down the hall. We’d exchange pleasantries, I’d wait a few minutes, and then, trying not to sweat, jog to the door and throw it open, shouting “Ho Ho Ho!”

Trotting is best, the manager had told me. It shakes the bells in a rhythmic fashion, it makes you look jolly, and it allows the youngsters to keep up. So, I trotted down the stairs, trotted into Santa’s village, and trotted to Santa’s throne.

It took a bit of politicking to talk as Santa to children. I saw their hope, their excitement, their wonder—and I wanted to keep that, not destroy it. But at the same time, I couldn’t promise anything, especially when I saw anxious parents watching me, silently calculating the damage in their heads. A simple “Santa will do his very best, and you have a Merry

Christmas” was usually best for everyone involved.

After a while, I really got into this Santa thing. Even though I didn’t feel the Christmas magic myself, I seemed to have a knack for spreading it around. So I decided to use my Santa costume and visit friends from my hometown. A few days before Christmas, I started attending their holiday parties as the fat man, spreading that Santa-ness around. I loved it.

One night I was driving along a rural road on my way to another party. I saw a flash in my headlights and hit the brakes. But a sickening thump told me I had been too slow.

I stopped and checked my rear view mirror. A deer’s still bleeding body was crumpled in the middle of the road. I couldn’t just leave it; another car was bound to be along soon. So I turned around and illuminated the scene with my headlights. Then I got out of the car, grateful for the warmth of my Santa suit, and began pulling the deer to the side of the road.

At that very moment, a van passed by. Slowly. Mom and Dad stared at me from the front seats; several children’s faces were plastered to the window. They looked as if they’d just witnessed a murder.

Donner. Dead. The big man trying to hide the evidence.

Great job, Santa.

THE LITTLE GIRL on my lap was eight, maybe nine, and dressed in the finest winter apparel. She arrived with a mom to match. They had probably arrived in a gold-trimmed Lexus. I braced myself for a long list of toys and clothes and games.

But she was polite, she was tentative, and when the moment came, this young girl looked directly into my eyes and, with unquestionable and absolute sincerity, said simply, “I want the kids who don’t get Christmas to have a Christmas this year.”

I wasn’t prepared. I was speechless, choked up, stunned. What would you say? She believed in Santa. More than any other kid I had met. I could see it in her eyes. Her hopes and wishes were genuine and heartfelt. Santa could do this; he’d deliver. This was Christmas!

LAST YEAR MY older kids wanted electric scooters. Being well-trained consumers, my wife and I obliged. I ordered my daughter a really cute, mini-Vespa-looking thing. Pink. UPS delivered it to the front door. Except it arrived during Christmas vacation, and the box had a big picture of the scooter prominently displayed on the outside.

My daughter signed for it.

Fairytale imploded.

I think I handled the whole thing well. Sure, there were trauma and tears, but after a good long talk, Santa had hired a new, world-wise little elf to help out on Christmas Eve.

But it’s one thing to have your hopes dashed by a UPS driver at the door with a scooter. It is quite another to wake up and realize that Santa hadn’t come through, yet again, for all those kids who don’t have a Christmas.

I often think back to that earnest little girl. I wonder about her. She gave a young shopping-mall Santa a gift, but where is she now? Likely a young mother, with her own toddlers in tow, trying to find the spirit of the season she embodied so long ago.

Perhaps it’s best that I don’t know her; perhaps it’s best that she lives on as a memory. But I still look for her, because her memory causes this Santa to be a little more reflective, a little more aware of the people around him. A little more willing to keep being Santa. Even after the costume comes off.

RORY SWENSEN
Stansbury Park, Utah

Around the World

THE KOLOB ORDER

*When Mormonism Meets
Masonry in France*

EVEN THOUGH THE FIRST LDS BAPTISMS IN Voltaire’s country occurred in the 1850s,¹ Mormonism never established much of a foothold in France. Today there are only around 35,000 French Latter-day Saints. Mormonism’s lack of success can be largely explained by the fact that since the 1789 Revolution, France has been a secular country.² Even though they believe in spirituality, most people don’t feel the need to belong to any particular religious institution.³ Culturally, however, France is still largely Roman Catholic. So even though most people don’t attend Mass regu-

larly, many still celebrate religious weddings and christenings for the sake of family traditions.⁴

In contrast to Mormonism, Freemasonry has found plenty of success in France. Two branches of Freemasonry exist there: the spiritualist, symbolist Masonry that requires its members to believe in God, and “liberal” Freemasonry, also called French Masonry. One doesn’t have to believe in a supreme being in order to belong to French Masonry.⁵

Mormonism and Freemasonry met in Nauvoo in the 1840s,⁶ but they did not come together in France until the beginning of the 21st century when, in 2006, the Kolob Order was established by Frenchman “Adama,” a long-time Mason and a recently converted Mormon. Adama is a *nomen mysticum*. As in some Masonic lodges and the LDS temple,⁷ members of the Kolob Order take on special names. As there are still misunderstandings about Freemasonry and Mormonism in France, Adama didn’t want his civil name to be revealed in this article.

HISTORY OF THE KOLOB ORDER

IN MARCH 1985, after reading a biography of the Freemason Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart,⁸ the 21-year-old Adama joined the Grand Orient of France lodge of French Masonry. In 1992, interested in symbolism and spiritualism, Adama joined the Grande Lodge of France. During this time, Adama studied esotericism, particularly that of 19th century French Rosicrucianism. In 2005, after ten years of study, Adama joined the LDS Church, reading the Book of Mormon for the first time in 1995. He has since served as a ward missionary, genealogist, and Sunday school teacher.⁹

Adama says he first conceived of creating the Kolob Order in February 2006 while reading the third chapter of the Book of Abraham, which particularly interested him because of its astronomy. While meditating on a hill in Coulevrine, near the village of Longuesse in the Vexin region (north of Paris),



The setup for a meeting of the Kolob Order in a Parisian restaurant. A candle, the Book of Abraham and the Nauvoo stone lie on the middle table. Long green collars decorate the three middle chairs.

Adama says he was inspired to write about the Kolob Order on a piece of paper.¹⁰ This mystical experience echoes George Fox's vision of souls coming to Christ on England's Pendle Hill, in 1652.¹¹

So far, the Kolob Order has held four public meetings in Paris.¹² The meetings were informal, being called "diner-débat." After a lecture and discussion ("débat"), participants shared a meal ("diner"). All the "diner-débats" took place in a Parisian restaurant.¹³

PHILOSOPHY OF THE KOLOB ORDER

THE KOLOB ORDER calls itself a symbolist and ritualist association with Mormon and Masonic inspirations. Adama specifies that it is not a religious organization. Some members are Mormons and Freemasons; some are only Masons or only LDS; others are neither. The Kolob Order has no official ties with either the LDS Church or any Masonic organization.¹⁴

Because of the diversity of its members, the Order doesn't focus exclusively on Mormon-Masonic history, even though that remains its primary object of research. As recorded on its Internet forum and blog, some members have interests in various occult movements such as Rosicrucianism and Martinism, and others in different historic subjects such as the Roman Empire.¹⁵ Some members study astronomy, and a few even study UFOs.¹⁶

The plurality of esoteric subjects the Kolob Order studies is visible through its Internet presence and its meetings. For example, on 24 January 2007, members of the Kolob Order listened to Yves-Marie Kamani, a member of B'Nai Brith and author of the novel, *Le Onzième Templier (The 11th Knight Templar)*.¹⁷ Kamani argued during the meeting that the Jewish community of Palestine taught Kabala to the Knights

Templar.¹⁸ On 27 April 2007, Adama lectured on pyramids located in Egypt, Mexico, and Bosnia. Adama argued that the Hill Cumorah is not a natural hill but a man-made pyramid.¹⁹ On 31 May 2007, Alain Boudier, a UFOlogist, presented a history of the UFO phenomenon in France.²⁰

The Order has also studied the symbolism of the Book of Abraham, interpreting each character of the book as a moral quality. Adama understands Abraham to be a symbol of obedience.²¹ The Order has also compared the pentacle found on the Nauvoo Temple to the stars found on 18th-century Masonic aprons. The Kolob Order argues that the stars may symbolize Venus.²²

The Kolob Order performs a small ritual at the beginning of its meetings. In silence, and in the presence of any other patrons in the restaurant, a member of the Order opens to the Third chapter of the Book of Abraham and then lights a candle to symbolize light and knowledge. Next to the Book of Abraham is a brick on which is carved "Nauvoo," as a symbol of Freemasonry and Mormonism in the Illinois city. Members of the Order dress in suits, white shirts, neckties, and long, green Masonic collars. The rituals of the Kolob Order are simple now as they only take place during informal "diner-débats." Adama is writing more elaborate rituals for future formal meetings.²³

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3. Danielle Herviey-Leger, *Le pèlerin et le converti : la religion en mouvement* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999), 290.
4. Charles Benamon, *L'avenir des religions en France : dialogue interreligieux ou affrontement?*, (Editions du Rocher: Paris, 2000), 56.
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FAUX FRIBERG FURY

THE BATTLE AROUND PROPOSITION 8 WAS fought in every conceivable arena of public opinion: editorials, TV, lawn signs, YouTube. The battle even raged across a most unlikely terrain: Arnold Friberg's landscapes of the Book of Mormon.



Shortly before Californians went to the polls, two of Friberg's classic paintings were appropriated by anonymous Photoshop enthusiasts, who doctored the images to enlist Book of Mormon heroes either for or against the controversial proposition to amend California's state constitution to ban same-sex mar-

riage. The doctored images circulated widely through the Mormon blogosphere.

In one illustration, Samuel the Lamanite displays a "Yes on 8" sign from atop the walls of Zarahemla while enraged spectators—liberal San Franciscans, no doubt—try futilely to shoot him down with arrows. In the second image, supporting the opposing view, Captain Moroni's standard of liberty has been refashioned as the "Standard of Equality." The banner's two upper lines, written in whimsical English characters, read, "Vote No Prop Eight."



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CHRISTAL VANEL
Sorbonne, France

Scripture Notes

SMOKE SIGNALS FOR SOJOURNERS

And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory of Zion shall be a defence.

— 2 NEPHI 14:5 (after ISAIAH 4:5)

SMOKE OFTEN GETS a bad rap in the scriptures. For example, smoke denotes the punishment of the wicked, particularly by fire and brimstone. Brimstone, of course, is the archaic word for sulfur, one of the few minerals which burns with an acrid smoke.

But smoke and the Almighty once kept close company in the form of a signal or sign. In the scripture cited above, Isaiah reminded the Israelites that during their sojourn in the wilderness they had been guided by a pillar of fire at night and a pillar of cloud (or smoke, in the God's Word translation)

during the day (Exodus 13: 21–22). It is easy to think of a fire or light to guide us; it is a little farther from our experience to think that way of a pillar of cloud or smoke.

After all, in Mormonism, smoke has few, if any, positive associations. Smoke reminds us of the cigarettes of wayward teenagers or the burning hulk of the Nauvoo Temple.

But smoke still plays an important role in some religious ceremonies. The Vatican, for example, announces the results of the ballots when electing a new Pope by using black smoke to indicate a failed ballot and white smoke for a successful one. The Russian Orthodox Church burns incense in censers as a regular part of worship. And the smoke of incense is important to Eastern religions as well.

According to John the Revelator, smoke in Isaiah's scripture was an outward manifestation of Israel's inward hope that as the smoke of the offering rose to heaven so would their prayers (Revelations 8:4).

Recently I reread Homer's *Odyssey*, and found in Odysseus someone not so different from me. He is constantly traveling away from home, tied up in seemingly endless business affairs while all the time his greatest desire is only to return home. However, unlike Odysseus, I don't worry that my wife will have to endure useless suitors in the form of home teachers while I am away.

Parts of the *Odyssey* ring especially true for me, like his descriptions of the "rosy-fingered dawn" and the "wine-dark sea." Since I have been to Greece and seen the sun's rays break over the Aegean's royal blue waves, I would have to say that Homer is dead on, even two or three thousand years later.

Another striking passage is Odysseus' captivity on an island where there is no hope of escape. Homer describes his longing to be home in this way: "Odysseus, who would give anything for the mere sight of the smoke rising up from his own land, can only yearn for death."

This passage may strike the contemporary reader as odd. Smoke rising up from one's own land? What happened, did the house catch on fire? No. Back in Homer's day, the sighting of smoke from far at sea was a positive sign. It gave the bedraggled sailor hope that someone was cooking a meal for the family, warming the home in anticipation of his return. It connoted the conclusion of a long journey and the pleasant expectation of reunion with loved ones.

When I return home from a business trip in winter, I drive over the top of the Salt Pass at the southern end of Star Valley, and long before the valley's snow-covered vistas come into sight the first glimpse of home that I see is the haze draped across the sky from wood-burning stoves and fireplaces. When I see those wisps of smoke, I know that home is near.

Perhaps it is not out of place to hope in the holiday season that someone in heaven is keeping the hearth warm for you, no matter how long you are delayed. And what if your first glimpse of that heavenly home is not light but instead the smoke rising from those fireplaces as you come across the horizon.

MICHAEL VINSON
Star Valley, Wyoming



The Sugar Beet

Mormon Matter Uncorrelated

NEWS FROM THE 3RD WARD

By Bishop Higgins

(Originally posted on BISHOPHIGGINS.BLOGSPOT.COM,
REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION)

Baby Blessing

LAST SUNDAY, JUSTIN GORBLE BLESSED HIS newest daughter, Cassie. Justin informed me that he forgot to mention a few things in the blessing. And while they won't "count" now, he did want me to mention some of the things he wishes he had remembered to say.

"You come from a long and proud line of Gorbles. Never forget that you are a Gorbles. While the name may be a little silly and sort of sounds like an overweight person with a double chin, you should still be proud of your heritage and just be glad your last name isn't Siemens.

"And Cassie, we bless you to never use swear words until you're at least 21, and then only if you're in a play about coal miners. We bless you to be extra kind to Chinese people. They seem to hardly ever get a break. We bless you to not marry anyone named Butch. That name alone should tell you all you need to know.

"We bless you to be healthy, and if you do get a fissure in an unmentionable place, it won't be until you are at least 93 years old. We bless you to not get vanity license plates.

"We bless you to be able to keep from bursting into laughter whenever you meet people who say they went to LDS Business College. We bless you to be a good speller.

"We bless you that, if during your lifetime, someone figures out a way for humans to become invisible, you will use this power for good, never for evil. Satan will try to tempt you to become invisible and go to movies without paying for them. Resist this temptation.

"We bless you to avoid getting an email address that sounds like you're a stripper. We bless you to be kind to animals, but never try to elect one to political office.

"We bless you with beautiful singing voice. Learn well the songs of Karen Carpenter. These songs will bless the lives of so many people at the old folks home if you can just get over the smell and humble yourself to go perform there."

Church Court: The Musical

CHARLIE TIBBLE, THE ward gay, is working on a new musical called *Church Court: The Musical*. It's a classic tale of love and betrayal and ultimately, redemption, and even more ultimately, delicate prancing (a recurring theme in all of Charlie's work). He expects to have the play finished in 2014, so stay tuned for that one.

General Authorityship 101

STARTING THIS SPRING, BYU will teach a class on how to be a general authority. The class not only prepares participants to become general authorities, but it will also help them learn lots more scriptures, including a few about faith and some about prayer.

Class topics will include:

- Which shades of dark blue are appropriate for a suit
- How to lovingly scorn sinners
- Voice intonation
- Avoiding loud laughter
- Avoiding fun
- How to read from a tele-prompter
- Food storage myths
- The two occasions when it's OK to swear.
- Celebrities we wish had never been Mormon to begin with
- White hair, gray hair, no hair—it's all good.
- The real reason blacks couldn't hold the priesthood for a while
- Underground tunnel navigation review
- Where to find stories of kids falling down wells or stories about people picking up talking snakes
- Most hilarious excommunications
- Be sure to marry someone better than you, but who talks to adults like they're talking to a kindergarten class
- Doctors who will discreetly remove tattoos (no one's perfect)